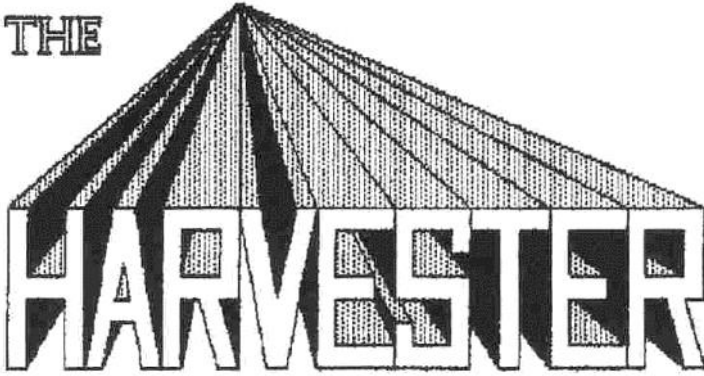


THE



"The harvest truly is great, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he would send forth laborers into his harvest" (Luke 10:2)

February 2015

No. 350

NEWS COVERAGE OF ACTS 10-11

(A Retelling of Acts 10-11)

Judean Journal

Christians Baptize Heathen

Recently in Caesarea, a group of men went into the home of a Gentile centurion and, defiling centuries of Jewish laws that began when the Lord God spoke with our Forefathers, extended fellowship and baptism into the newfangled religion of Christianity to all the Gentiles gathered there. News of this spread quickly through all of Jerusalem, causing concern and

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anger. There is even the threat of violence. A young man standing by those who sell doves outside the temple was handing out flyers with this message: "If there was ever a cause for the noble and right Jewish nation to rejoice, the foolish followers of Jesus baptizing Gentiles is it! To the thousands of Jews who have fallen victim to the new fad of Christianity and foolishly thrown away their heritage, their homes, their families in hopes for a seat in the new kingdom of this supposed Christ, this incident should prove that these people are not serving the pure and holy Jehovah. The God who told Joshua to destroy all who lived in the land of Canaan because they were unclean would not have welcomed the Gentiles into His fold."

One of leaders of the Pharisees, speaking to us on condition of strict anonymity, said that this event might not cause converted Christians to return to Judaism, but it certainly should slow the spread of the new religion. When asked if religious leaders would now give letters authorizing persecution of the Christians as has been discussed so many times of late, he said, "the so-called Christians have gone too far."

Simon Peter, the ring-leader of those guilty of the heresy of following Jesus and the person implicated in the incident by the Caesarean Sentinel was not available for comment.

Caesarean Sentinel

Cornelius, Household Welcomed into Christianity

"I was praying, and an angel told me to call for Simon Peter," Cornelius, a centurion of the Italian band and a man known for his generosity

and noble spirit, said describing recent events that unfolded in his home. "Peter came with others from Jerusalem. While he taught, something miraculous happened and they were convinced that God had opened the doors of His Kingdom to all men of every nation."

For centuries, strict Jewish custom has not permitted those of the Hebrew nation to eat with or come into the home off someone not of Jewish descent. This abrupt change in philosophy is only being embraced by those of the sect of Christianity, a new division from Judaism of those who follow Jesus, the teacher who was crucified and is claimed to have risen from the dead.

The Jewish nation rejects Christianity, and still will not accept Cornelius into Judaism. "Oh, I'm not concerned about Judaism at all. It's Jesus Christ that I serve," Cornelius said.

Jewish leaders have been rumored to be planning retaliation against the Christians for some time. When asked if persecution would befall Cornelius and his household, a Pharisee visiting Caesarea on business had a strong reaction: he spat on the floor. "Let Jehovah be praised by the pure and holy nation of Israel."

Christianity reaching beyond the boundaries of the Jewish nation adds one more religious option to the hundreds available for those in the Mediterranean area. The potential for uprisings against the new religion by sects other than the Jews is unlikely at present.

As to whether or not the events that occurred in Cornelius's house will make a major difference in the future religious scene in the region or in the world, only time will tell.

***Hand-distributed Letter to Followers of
Jesus in Jerusalem***

My beloved brethren, peace and joy in Jesus Christ to you all.

By now you have all heard, either by the word that spread through our brethren or by the hand of the Pharisees who have tried to take this event and use it to weaken the hearts of those who follow Jesus, that Simon Peter and others that were with him baptized the Gentile Cornelius and his household. I write to you as a witness myself to the recounting of details given in Jerusalem. In the beginning I was skeptical, but now fully believe that the Spirit of God led our brethren.

Our brother Simon Peter returned from Caesarea with such unusual news. He told the apostles and disciples gathered together how he received a vision. "A sheet was lowered from heaven," he said, "containing unclean animals." He was told to "kill and eat." This happened three times and sent a strong message to Peter. The Spirit then told him that men were coming with a special request and he should go with them.

The men arrived just as foretold, and Peter traveled to Caesarea, finding a house full of Gentiles waiting for him. After being welcomed by Cornelius, he learned that an angel told Cornelius to call for him to hear words of salvation. Peter told them of his recent vision and started to preach. As he began, the Holy Spirit fell on the people in such a way that it was obvious to Peter and his companions that God had accepted the Gentiles. He told them the story of Christ, of his death and resurrection. When he finished, baptism was offered to all.

Peter said to all that were in attendance as he retold these events, "Who was I to withstand God?" Indeed, brethren. If God, through the angel, told Cornelius to call for Peter, and if God gave the vision to Peter, and if the Holy Spirit fell on the Gentiles while they heard the Gospel of Jesus Christ, then who could forbid offering baptism to those who seemed to be so accepted by God?

And yet this is still a point of contention among our brethren. What other reason could there be for the Spirit falling on the Gentiles? Was their salvation secured by this before baptism? Not so, for Peter plainly told us that it fell on them at the beginning of his sermon. There can be no salvation apart from Jesus Christ, and the Spirit fell on them before they learned of our Lord. Was this action of the Spirit designed to make the Gentiles teachers of the Gospel? Perhaps some will be teachers in the future, but had this been the original purpose there would have been no need to call for Peter. Faith comes by hearing the words of the Gospel, not by the outpouring of the Spirit. There is no reason for the Spirit being poured on the Gentiles other than to show us of the circumcision that God has opened the doors of the Gospel to the world.

And so, those who heard Peter's words in Jerusalem were fully convinced that God has now opened the doors of salvation to the Gentile nations. Glory be to God! My prayer is that you will be fully persuaded by this letter.

Some of our brethren feel that the Spirit will lead evangelists to visit the Gentile nations and spread the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Already

the message has been taken to Antioch. Our prayer, night and day, is that the Lord will send teachers well equipped with the strength, courage and knowledge to evangelize the Gentile nations, the Jews abroad, and the world. And our prayer for you, my brethren, is that you may be strengthened in the love of our Lord Jesus Christ until he comes again.

CHAD PRINCE
Oxford, AL

APOLOGIA

QUESTION: Was the vision of Cornelius proof of his salvation?

ANSWER: The 10th and 11th chapters of Acts give the account of the conversion of the household of Cornelius, the first Gentiles to come into the church. To start with, Cornelius saw a vision of an angel in his house who actually talked to him (Acts 10:1-8; 11:13-14; etc.). Many today would declare that such a glorious vision would be definite evidence of salvation, but was that true of Cornelius? Did he think he was thereby saved? The angel told him to send for the apostle Peter *"Who shall tell thee words, whereby thou and all thy house shall be saved."* (Acts 11:14). The parallel words to this in Acts 10:6 read: *"...he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do."* The messengers of Cornelius told Peter of the vision and how he

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(Cornelius) was waiting to "hear words of thee" (Acts 10:22). Upon the arrival of the apostle, Cornelius again told of the vision, and then said, "Immediately therefore I sent to thee; and thou hast well done that thou art come. Now therefore are we all here present before God, to hear all things that are commanded thee of God" (Acts 10:33). After the rapidly ensuing events, we read of what happened to these believing Gentiles. "And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. (Acts 10:48).

This same apostle had preached on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2, "Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost [Spirit]. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:38-39). Who were the ones mentioned as being "afar off"? In Ephesians 2:11-17 (notice especially verse 17) we learn this expression refers to Gentiles (non-Jewish people). In other words, the apostle told the household of Cornelius the same thing he had preached on Pentecost (offering the same promise)—Repent and be baptized; you will be forgiven and receive God's Spirit. This promise is for everyone who will do this, including Gentiles. Everyone who is Scripturally converted is converted in this way, "as many as the Lord our God shall call." Visions and dreams have nothing to do with it.

Gibbons, James E. "Are Visions, Dreams, and Religious Experiences Proof of Salvation?" *The Sword and Staff*: 1-2.

Submitted by J.D. Nash
Gadsden, AL

Gospel Meetings

DATES	PLACE	SPEAKER
January 30 - February 1	Taylor's Cross Roads Roanoke, AL	Phil Carter, David Carter, Paul Carter

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. What natural disaster happened when Abram and Sarai arrived in the land of Canaan?
2. Why did Solomon turn away from God when he was old?
3. What killed the plant that God had provided Jonah for shade?
4. Who asked Jesus to remember him when he came into His kingdom?
5. From which city was Paul's letter to Philemon written?

...and remember last month's questions?

1. Which two tribes of Israel were not named after sons of Jacob? EPHRAIM AND MANASSEH (Joshua 14:4)
2. How did Moses assure victory against the Amalekites? KEPT HIS HANDS HELD UP (Exodus 17:11-12)
3. In what town did Martha and Mary live? BETHANY (John 11:1)
4. What did the chief priest and Pharisees give Judas to enable him to help arrest Jesus? A BAND OF MEN AND OFFICERS (John 18:3)
5. In the New Jerusalem described in Revelation, what are the twelve gates made from? PEARLS (Revelation 21:21)